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SUMMARY

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IMPROVING MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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IMPROVING MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. In a less developed country, rapid improvements in agriculture requires improvements in human abilities as well as in technology, institutions and organization. The development process brings in additional resources; these permit more productive combinations of new and old. To assure that these are the best possible, improvements in managerial skills are needed by policy makers, administrators, directors of agricultural research, extension and teaching, operating farmers and others.. Human improvement is a vital matter.

2. To be effective, managers must take account of prevailing conditions in the country, three of which have changed significantly since earlier days of economic development. One is that a great many people now expect to have a say in deciding what should be done. This is good. However, many will not have the knowledge needed for guiding the development process itself and may lend an adverse influence. Frequently they want results too quickly when, in fact, continued frugality and sustained effort are essential for getting dynamic growth in motion. Another is that the population explosion has come before development is well started. For agriculture, this will keep people on farms and prevent the gains that come from increasing the size of small farms. It also makes it difficult to raise productivity and income of landless workers. A third is that the present slow rate of growth in agricultural export markets limits the expansion in production that might be undertaken to earn foreign exchange.

3. Most countries are using national planning to deal with these and other problems, a move that requires managerial skill on the part of planners. India is proving that national planning and political freedom can be harmonized. But planning for agricultural development is difficult, especially in finding an effective way for government to help farmers become more productive. Massive government programs with this objective have failed more often than not. A key matter is for planners to understand the process by which farming becomes more productive as contrasted with that of industry. With farming, the present farms and farmers must produce the additional output whereas it is mainly the additional factories that produce the larger industrial output. In less developed countries, most farmers are traditional and conservative in outlook; large increases in output from their farms is not easy to bring about.

4. If production per farm is to be substantially increased, the forces of change must be brought to bear simultaneously and continually on all parts of the agricultural sector including large numbers of farmers. However, if the country's whole agriculture is treated as a unit, the limited supply of skilled helpers and technical resources for implementing the change will spread too thinly and little will be accomplished. Concentration in selected areas is essential if a break with the past is to be made; these should be favorable areas for such an effort.

5. A prerequisite to success with farmers is that the surrounding conditions must support the effort: a favorable economic climate; adequate technical supplies; a usable credit system that fits the needs of smaller farmers as well as larger one; effective research to develop output-increasing possibilities; extension to help farmers make the needed changes; administrative organization that fits the special needs of agricultural development, something different from the usual system. Human ability plays a larger part in production than is generally realized, thus growth in understanding is a prerequisite to the effective use of improved production methods.

6. It will be difficult to bring about a break with the past in the selected farming area, so a sustained impact program is needed, one that centers on a few key matters in its opening phase. It should develop a simple, dependable and profitable "package of improved production practices" for the main crops suitable for hundreds of farmers to use - a job for specialists; these to be offered to all farmers who can use them. The farmer should not be asked to make changes in his cropping system until he has mastered the yield-increasing practices. A thorough and continuous educational program with emphasis on well planned demonstrations of the improved practices is required to convince each farmer that they will fit his own situation. Then, through the use of a new kind of simple farm production plan, the farmer will be shown the advantage to him of adopting the practices as a package thus calling for a single decision - choosing between the new way and his usual way. The extension worker helps him see that many other farmers are taking the same step forward; the traditional farmer wants assurance that the new idea has general acceptance.

7. When large numbers of farmers make this first important step forward, the total output and income increasing effect will be clearly noticeable and pave the way for further progress. The simple farm plan calls for an annual review of progress and new possibilities with each farmer, thus is a powerful and progressive tool for improving the productivity of the farmer as well as the farm. It is only as farmers, themselves, grow in management ability that they find ways to make their land and other resources increasingly productive, a necessity where the farm land is already occupied.

8. Small farms frequently pose a special problem. Careful examination usually shows that large numbers of them can become economically viable if the process discussed above of making the farmer productive is applied to the small farmer, too. Given a program designed for his needs, usually this can be accomplished. There will be cases, however, which suffer from disabilities that the farmer, himself, cannot remove. Some will respond to treatment, others not. Finally, some farms are such tiny economic units that the farmer must be considered a welfare case unless dependable off-farm employment is available to provide the main source of income.

9. In the end, the agriculture of the less developed country will make progress in keeping with the development of its people.

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